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"I Learned It In My Methods Course": How Secondary English/Language Arts Teachers Learn About Writing Instruction Before Their Graduation

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“I LEARNED IT IN MY METHODS COURSE”: HOW SECONDARY ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHERS LEARN ABOUT WRITING INSTRUCTION BEFORE THEIR GRADUATION

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Early into my teaching career, I collected a stack of fifty-two essays from my eleventh grade U.S. Literature class. These students responded to a prompt, which asked them to craft an argumentative essay about Arthur Miller's play, *The Crucible*. As I sat down at my desk beginning to skim over the papers, I became overwhelmed by my limited experience assessing student writing; therefore, I asked for some advice. My mentor teacher, a veteran teacher with more than ten years of experience, reassured me by explaining, "Read the essays first all the way through without commenting on them, and then divide them into piles based on relative letter grades and begin writing down your comments." After overhearing my question in the department work room, another second-year teacher explained her grading methodology: "I write my comments and assign a grade all at the same time," she said. Finally, a veteran teacher chimed in, stating his belief that the best way to score an essay is to use a rubric and write comments about organization as needed. With so many opinions about how to assess students' writing, I wondered to myself about whose advice I should follow? What would be most beneficial to the students? Which method would garner the best results for the students to improve their writing abilities and transfer my comments to their next writing situation? Even though I had taken a general methods course before this semester of student teaching, I felt as though I had very few tools to use to address this diverse set of issues.

Prior to starting graduate school, I taught ninth and tenth graders at a parochial high school in the Cleveland area for three years. My academic studies at the graduate level have prompted me to reevaluate my teaching of writing at the high school level. Even after a few years within the education field, I cannot help but feel as though I lacked

the knowledge of theoretical approaches to writing instruction when I began teaching. I could explain Shakespeare's language in *Romeo and Juliet's* balcony scene, teach the elements of the Petrarchan sonnet, and provide reading strategies to help struggling students work through *The Canterbury Tales,* but I did not know where to start in my approach to teaching writing, the academic area where students often need the most help.

In retrospect, while I did not have the theoretical language to explain my pedagogical decisions, I relied on the firsthand practices of more experienced teachers. This ability to learn through the experience of others characterizes the profession of education, and more specifically the teaching of composition. Stephen North defined this process of learning as the *lore of teaching*. In his book, *The Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field,* North argues that a collective knowledge exists among teachers of composition, and teachers accrue this amassed knowledge by "what has worked, is working, or might work in teaching, doing, or learning writing" (23). A new teacher accesses this knowledge because of a need and draws upon the experiences of those teachers who have come before her in order to gain their knowledge.

North envisions a House of Lore consisting of "each generation of Practitioners inherit[ing] this pile from the one before, [and the new teacher] is ushered around some of what there is, and then, in its turn, adds on its own touches" (27). North emphasizes that this process is continual for teachers; it does not end after student teaching or after their first year of teaching, but happens year after year. For this process to work, teachers need to evaluate their teaching styles in collaboration and communication continuously with their colleagues. While many secondary English/Language Arts (ELA) teachers receive admittance to this "House of Lore" by way of student teaching or during their

first year of teaching, they still need support and knowledge of effective writing and reading instruction prior to these experiences. For instance, I engaged in the practice of trial and error to instruct those fifty-two students in the first U.S. Literature course I taught. If I had the theoretical background concerning writing instruction then that I have since gained in graduate school, I would have been more confident to teach writing to my first students.

In light of the recent research concerning student writing across the country and teachers' knowledge about writing instruction, this essay will investigate how a methods course impacts teachers' readiness to teach writing at the secondary level by questioning Ohio English/Language Arts (ELA) teachers' beliefs about their readiness to teach writing. First, I outline the disparity between students' writing abilities across the country in order to show the need for effective writing instruction for high school students across the country. Then, I delineate various models of methods programs already existing at universities within the state. Essentially, the value of reading over writing not only occurs in English classrooms across the country at the college and high school level, but this privileging of one literary discipline over another seeps into Education methods courses for secondary ELA teachers as well. In order to help new ELA teachers address students' lack of writing readiness in high school and colleges across the state, these future teachers need an equal balance of theoretical and pedagogical frameworks for both writing and reading instruction.

To argue this point, I apply similar techniques of researchers such as Joan Oftedahl, Chester Laine, and Edward Fagan to formulate a survey for ELA teachers in Ohio. In my survey and select interviews with the respondents, these Ohio teachers

suggest they wish they would have been given access to more writing theory before their time in the classroom. In response to survey data collected from eighteen current Ohio-certified teachers, I propose ways in which to modify the current methods programs in order to answer the call of some teachers for more time spent on writing instruction. To build the confidence of teachers' and to produce more effective writing teachers, colleges and universities must provide a balance between reading and writing instruction for potential ELA teaching candidates as well as allowing future teachers the chance to practice these skills in their methods courses.

Learning How to Teach Writing: A Literature Review

The reflection on my own teaching practices comes at a critical time in the field of Education as well as in Rhetoric and Composition studies. In this section, I will explore the current trends in research regarding students' writing proficiency and teacher preparation to improve their students' writing abilities. In order for teachers to address these disparities, I must first outline the wider discussion concerning writing instruction taking place at the middle and high school level. According to recent research conducted in 2005, the ACT reports that "nearly one third of all high school graduates are not ready for college-level English composition courses" (qtd. in Graham and Perin 7). Harvey Daniels and Steven Zemelman suggest that only a portion of students "are receiving the sort of composition instruction [needed] … even after the schools' intensified emphasis on writing skills over the past several years" (14). And in 2011, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) conducted a writing assessment of fourth, eighth, and twelfth graders across the country; these writing samples were evaluated according to

four levels: below basic, basic, proficient, or advanced (Graham and Perin 8).[1] Student writing samples should be at proficient levels or above. Statistics reveal that 27% percent of student writing samples in the eighth grade scored at or above proficient level ("The Nation"). This same statistic applied to the twelfth grade students as well. Therefore, the majority of students wrote at levels below what is to be expected. The goal for the future is to move the 73% of students to at least a proficient level of writing, and in order to address this disparity, the NAEP provides research that reveals how teachers could improve writing instruction in their classrooms. For instance, the assessment data show that students' writing ability strongly correlated with the amount of writing and revision undertook in the classroom.

While studies notice the lack of proficiency in students' writing, much of the recent research on adolescent literacy does not prescribe ways to improve students' writing. Rather, it focuses more on students' need for increased reading instruction in the hopes that this education would translate to the improvement of the students' writing skills (Graham and Perin 5). However, Stephen Graham and Dolores Perin explain that "it is often assumed that adolescents who are proficient readers must be proficient writers, too. If this were the case, then helping students learn to read better would naturally lead to the same students writing well" (7). In their research, which investigated how to improve writing instruction for students, Graham and Perin call for reading and writing to have "their own dedicated instruction" (8). These two authors detail eleven elements of writing instruction, which they believe will, effectively change writing

[1] The National Assessment of Educational Progress administers this writing assessment at the national and state level. The last national assessment of writing was in 2011; the next scheduled writing assessment of fourth, eighth, and twelfth graders will be conducted in 2017.

outcomes for adolescent students; the elements they discuss are as follows: "writing strategies, summarization, collaborative writing, specific product goals, word processing, sentence combining, prewriting, inquiry activities, the process writing approach, study of models, and writing for content learning" (Graham and Perin 11). Their study shows that adequate teacher training on some of these writing strategies, such as the process writing approach and collaborative writing affected student outcomes positively (Graham and Perin 20). Graham and Perin advocate for more research studies dedicated to "adolescent writing interventions that work, so that administrators and teachers can select the strategies that are most appropriate whether for whole classrooms, small groups, or individual students" (11). The more teachers and administrators know about the writing process and students' current and future writing situations, the more adept they can be to structure their classrooms to approach students' writing needs. If the current research reveals students require help with writing in order to prepare for the demands of the workforce or college, what does research suggest about the preparation of these students' teachers in regards to writing instruction?

Despite the data collected on students' writing abilities, very little research has been done about the curriculum of methods courses for the preparation of secondary ELA teachers to address these issues. Additionally, the research that has been carried out is too old to be of significant value. Educators and professors are not the only ones who ask the questions: "how are pre-service English teachers being prepared for their professional lives" and what separates an effective teacher from an ineffective one (Smagorinsky and Whiting 1)? This same question has been asked in publications such as, *Time Magazine's* 2014 article, "Rotten Apples" attempts to understand what distinguishes

effective teachers from their ineffective counterparts. The existing scholarly research attempts to answer these questions and researchers in both Rhetoric and Composition and in Education investigate the best practices of effective teachers of writing. For instance, Peter Smagorinsky and Melissa E. Whiting argue that little research has been done in regards to the general methods courses that future English educators typically enroll in while pursuing their undergraduate degree. More simply, these education methods courses focus on providing future teachers with the theory behind instructional practices and the pedagogical implementation of these practices. Instead of advancing a teaching candidate's subject area knowledge, these methods courses aim to develop the potential candidate's instructional practices and provide the theoretical background for practical strategies for the various types of student learners the teacher will encounter over the course of their career.

Smagorinsky and Whiting agree with North, that a majority of learning for teachers happens outside a formalized class, and many college professors learn how to teach a methods course, "over dinner and in the corridors [where] we talk about what books we use, what activities we involve students in, how we assess their progress, and other aspects of pre-service education" (Smagorinsky 2). Smagorinsky and Whiting suggest that for many professors they must rely on these informal interactions to instruct a methods class because of the "little formal knowledge of how pre-service teachers are educated" outside of their own experience (Smagorinsky 2). These two researchers analyze sample syllabi of methods courses in order to present various ways in which an English educator can prepare prospective teachers at the college level. However, despite the usefulness of their project to survey various structures for English methods classes,

Smagorinsky and Whiting fail to address how methods courses affect prospective teaching candidates' readiness to teach writing and reading; and of particular interest, they argue that many of the methods courses labeled as writing methods courses "served more as writing workshops than as courses in how to teach English" (Smagorinsky 8). These courses aided future teachers in their own personal writing endeavors rather than providing various pedagogical and theoretical frameworks that they could translate to their future classrooms; these classes teach writing, but do not directly address *how* to teach writing.

While Smagorinsky and Whiting's study bridges the gap in research concerning methods programs for secondary English teachers, much of the Rhetoric and Composition research concerning teacher preparation on writing instruction focuses more on the training of teaching assistants and graduate assistants at the collegiate level rather than to their secondary (middle and high school) counterparts. Though some Rhetoric and Composition scholars have advocated for more research into the study of writing programs, these commentaries leave secondary ELA teachers absent from the discussion. For example, in his 1977 essay, "Balancing Theory with Practice in the Training of Writing Teachers," Richard Gebhardt calls for the revision of writing programs to create a balance between theory and practice. While he does not specifically mention English methods courses in his survey of general college writing programs, he does outline the types of knowledge that the ideal English teaching candidate would master by his or her graduation. The essay calls for these students to have the knowledge of "the structure and history of the English language," a complex and grounded understanding of the word *rhetoric*, various theoretical approaches to the teaching of

writing, and the ability to transform these theories into practical applications in the classroom (Gebhardt 134-138). A course that hinges both on the theoretical and experiential application of writing would help these future writing educators to be able to "know the 'what' of composition teaching; but also the 'how' and the 'why'" (Gebhardt 138). He argues that not only must these teachers understand the theoretical background of their practices, but they must also learn techniques to apply their knowledge to grading student writing, constructing writing prompts, and conducting writing conferences. With the heavy emphasis on writing, beyond literary analysis, in the Common Core Curriculum adopted by many states already, potential ELA teaching candidates need to be taught the same theoretical framework as these graduate assistants. Given that only one-third of high school students who move onto college are prepared for writing at this level, the training of secondary English teachers in composition should be given more consideration in the field of Rhetoric and Composition provided that these teachers' instructional practices influence the writing experiences of students within universities' first year writing programs (Graham and Perin 7).

At universities across the country, many potential ELA teaching candidates acquire much of their content knowledge in their primary department of English. Despite this, their ability to be competent, skillful writers and readers does not necessarily translate to how well they teach these subjects. Peter Elbow in his essay, "The War between Reading and Writing," remarks on the disparity between writing courses and courses heavily devoted to reading with a "sprinkling" of "course writing" in English departments (Elbow 10). He argues that in English courses at the high school and college level, writing "is traditionally meant to serve reading" (10). In the same spirit as Elbow,

Daniels and Zemelman assert that while many prospective ELA teachers have some coursework devoted to writing or writing workshops, few were required to take a methods course specifically geared towards writing instruction. Daniels and Zemelman asserts, "Given this gap in their training, teachers naturally emphasize what they are most comfortable with: elementary teachers concentrate on reading and high school teachers stress the interpretation of literature" (15). When English teachers privilege literary analysis over other types of writing at the high school level, students often transition to college unprepared to encounter other types of writing and rhetorical situations, such as academic research and argumentative writing.

Much of the existing research touches upon Elbow's claims about the imbalance of reading and writing experiences at the college level, yet some may argue that there exist specific courses devoted to writing for potential secondary English teachers to enroll in during their undergraduate studies. However, these courses, in many states, are elective, rather than mandatory for ELA secondary teachers to take in order to graduate. Richard Gebhardt in his article, "Training Basic Writing," focuses on an overview of basic writers and professional programs to address these students at Findlay College in Ohio (46). While Gebhardt notes that the phrase, "basic writing" is a complex term indicating a "wide spectrum of abilities" from writing without focus, coherence or organization (46), he generalizes that most of the basic writers at Findlay College lack "academic confidence" and "experience with the writing process" (48). Gebhardt transitions from providing the needs of basic writers to how Findlay addresses their struggles through undergraduate, graduate, and faculty preparation. His proposed course topics, texts and themes focus on writing theory and instruction. Courses, such as the

ones outlined by Gebhardt, suggest that in order to teach writing, one must have at least a basic theoretical framework and consider themselves writers. He does indicate that many secondary ELA teaching candidates take these courses; however, they are not required to take the courses he surveys in his essay. While learning opportunities exist for teachers like those outlined by Gebhardt, many teaching candidates do not always have the time or room in their schedules to fully take advantage of these writing courses. Gebhardt's article provides a glimpse into various courses specifically geared at writing instruction and methodology happening at Ohio universities, but Gebhardt does not address how courses such as these would be helpful to future teachers pursuing a license to teach secondary English/Language Arts.

Even though researchers, such as Gebhardt, survey teachers and professors, and pose ways to reform secondary English teachers methods programs, beyond these suggestions for revision little has been done to address disparities between what is taught to these future teachers and the needs of their students once they move in the workforce. In her 1985 essay published in *Education Today*, Joan Oftedahl tries to address this disparity. She studies the different goals of methods professors and secondary English teaching candidates, and finds that both groups unanimously feel that any English method course should address "strategies for teaching composition" followed by the pedagogy of teaching reading (156). She asked for responses from both secondary ELA methods professors and ELA teachers in order to compare their thoughts about the structure and effectiveness of methods courses. Her study notes that while methods professors ranked "purposes for teaching composition and purposes for teaching literature as important topics," future teachers wished to focus more on sequencing and grading writing

assignments (156). Therefore, there exists a disparity between types of knowledge teachers need upon entering the workforce and what professors and institutions provide to them in their general methods courses.

Oftedahl asserts that many secondary Language Arts teachers did not believe their methods classes prepared them to meet the needs of their students. Oftedahl argues, "Teachers thought more emphasis should be placed on strategies for teaching composition and literature rather than on more philosophical issues; teachers wanted more attention focuses on the *how* of teaching" (158, emphasis mine). According to testimonials and questionnaires, these teaching candidates understand the philosophical framework of *why* they will teach reading and writing; however, they wish to focus on *how* to use theory to inform their practices. Oftedahl calls on Education departments to improve and restructure their methods courses to meet the needs of these future teachers, but the teachers' demand for more time spent on the *how* of writing instruction implicates Rhetoric and Composition departments as well. According to the current research about contemporary students' writing, both Rhetoric and Composition and Education departments need to address the issues that teachers voice in Oftedahl's 1985 study that remain unanswered.

While most of the research above discusses the curriculum of methods courses and the key agents within the process, professors and students, it is important to also explore teachers' reflections about their preparation to teach once they graduate to see how they apply any knowledge gained through their college courses to their writing instruction in their own classrooms. The most crucial time for new teachers to need support and direction that a methods course can provide comes after the student graduates

from the university (Bushman 242). And Oftedahl reevaluates the same question that J. N. Hook asked of teachers two decades earlier as outlined in a study by Edward Fagan and Chester Laine. Hook investigated teachers' perceived readiness to teach writing and about the effectiveness of undergraduate teaching preparation programs in Illinois (Fagan 67). His study ultimately found inadequate preparation of middle-school and high-school Language Arts teachers in areas relating to composition (grammar, English language) and "language preparation in general" (Fagan 67). In response to similar issues resurfacing among teachers after Hook's study, two researchers, Edward R. Fagan and Chester Laine adapted the key components of Hook's study ten years later to Pennsylvania's teacher training programs. They noticed significant changes in teacher education programs from Hook's study, such as developing "more restrictive" and "more specified" programs (70). During Hook's research, he and his colleagues found that "thirty five percent [of Illinois teachers] felt that their 'less successful' area of teaching was in composition" (69). However, in the Pennsylvania study, teacher dissatisfaction with undergraduate preparation programs was reported at thirty-six percent, falling in close proximity to the number of Hook's Illinois teachers (70).

Fagan and Laine reiterate that narratives, not data, capture teachers overwhelming call for change in methods programs within the state of Pennsylvania. The respondents of their questionnaire emphasized what they needed in terms of their own preparation for teaching for they explained:

'Our background in teaching composition is sufficient but not strong.'

'We need more experience in composition evaluation.'

> ‘We need more practice in implementing lesson plans for slow learners; theory isn’t enough’
>
> ‘I know how I should test and teach. But for the first- year teacher, the ‘should’s become the ‘ables.’ (71)

While many researchers, as noted above, call for changes in teacher methods programs, teachers also understand the need for reform of these methods programs through their own experience after leaving university classrooms. These narratives resemble the questions I had generated as I received my first set of argumentative essay during my student teaching experience; the inherent anxieties these teachers express to the researchers due to their perceived lack of knowledge, I, too felt during my first year of teaching under the pressure to improve student writing.

The Ohio Department of Education has adopted the standards dictated by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) for universities to adhere to when offering licensing programs for secondary ELA teachers. According to these standards for teacher preparation programs, they place specific emphasis on both the theoretical and pedagogical experiences for future teachers. Despite these standards by the NCTE, which balance the value of reading and writing instruction, the Ohio Department of Education only additionally requires a teaching candidate to take a three semester hour course devoted to reading instruction, not one for the teaching of writing. In the state of Ohio, many teacher education programs consistently value the teaching of reading over writing through the construction of general methods courses for all secondary teaching candidates. Even though the state of Ohio endorses the NCTE and NCATE standards,

they do not require a specific methods course focusing on the theoretical and pedagogical application of writing. Instead the Ohio Department of Education only requires a 3 semester hour reading requirement; therefore, the implicit message still is that secondary English teachers are readers teaching writing (Ohio Department of Education). Rhetoric and Composition theorists have long noted the displacement of English teachers' education and Richard Lane remarks, "There is little uniformity in the way English-education programs are placed" (89). Likewise, in their article in response to questions at the Conference on English Education Summit concerning English teacher preparation programs, Randi Dickson and other rhetoric and composition theorists recognize that "the work conditions and resources provided by different institutions [to educators of writing] vary tremendously" (313). The lack of consistent standards in regards to the education of ELA teachers causes disparities in teacher education as well as the instruction students receive in the classroom.

Dickinson's claim about the diversity of methods courses sheds insight on one potential reason why the current trends on students' writing proficiency has not changed much over the last ten years. The lack of uniformity in the education of ELA teachers across the state of Ohio negatively affects the students as not all teachers have the same knowledge of the writing process and instruction to draw upon in their classrooms. Of the fifty colleges and universities in the state of Ohio offering Education majors, only six colleges and universities offer a methods course for Language Arts teachers that focus specifically on writing rather than a general methods course; these schools, which offer a specialized methods courses, are: Kent State University, Ohio University, Miami University, University of Akron, and Ohio State University. Kent State offers two

separate courses, one devoted to reading and the other to writing, entitled "Teaching Literature in Secondary Schools" and "Teaching Language and Composition" (Kent 2). Similar to Kent State University, Ohio University and Ohio State University also separate their methods courses for prospective English/Language Arts teaching candidates. Miami University offers the most extensive background for teaching candidates pertaining to Rhetoric and Composition, where their future graduates of Adolescent/Young Adult Education English must take "Backgrounds to Composition Theory and Research" as well as one course devoted to "Strategies for Writers" and "Digital Writing and Rhetoric" (Miami 1-2). These universities, with the exception of The University of Akron, are also the schools, within the state of Ohio, that have a doctoral program in Rhetoric and Composition. Therefore, these specified writing methods courses seem to be products of the mutual collaboration between the disciplines of Education and Rhetoric and Composition housed within the English departments.

How Teachers Get Taught: Methodology of My Study

In an effort to identify if in fact teachers today in the state of Ohio would rank writing and composition instruction as one of their less successful areas of teaching, I reapply Fagan's and Laine's study, as well as Oftedahl's research, to investigate Ohio undergraduate secondary English teacher preparation programs. While both of these studies specialize on various topics in teacher education programs, my survey will focus specifically on the preparation of future English/Language Arts teachers in regards to writing instruction, theory, and pedagogy. Therefore, in this section, I outline my research process, which shows that teachers today in the state of Ohio would rank writing and composition instruction as one of their less successful areas of teaching.

In order to understand the current views of ELA teachers, I queried graduates of Ohio universities or those teachers with a license in the state of Ohio about how the theoretical and pedagogical framework they learned in their methods courses prepared them for the student populations in their current classrooms. Ultimately, the literature review informed my creation of the survey and subsequent interviews, and my research examines various unanswered questions discussed by the critics, such as: how do English teachers from Ohio universities rank the overall effectiveness of their methods courses in college in regards to composition studies, and what areas do they wish their methods courses addressed, and what comprises effective writing instruction? In order to address these complex questions, I requested feedback from twenty-five current Ohio teachers about their experience with writing theory and instruction before their student teaching field work and the effect this course had on their current career as a teacher. Because of the heavy emphasis on the *lore of teaching*, teachers' readiness to share with others how they approach the content within their classrooms, I conducted my research in two ways. First, participants completed an online survey, comprised of objective and free response questions, and the second step included interviewing three of the participants in order for them to expand upon their initial responses with more specific questions concerning writing instruction. These interviewees included a cross-section of teachers: a first year teacher, a fifth year teacher, and a veteran teacher with over twenty years of teaching experience. The participants for the initial study were contacted by email; I reached out to these twenty-five teaching contacts, who I have known during my time as a high school English teacher and student in the Cleveland area. According to my communication with these educators, many teachers also passed the survey along to colleagues to complete

based on conversations they have heard in the halls and in their Professional Learning Communities; and of those initial twenty-five teachers, eighteen instructors responded to the online questionnaire.

Due to the wide range of variety in the structure and requirements of teaching programs across the state, I used the online survey to collect data regarding the background information from these teachers. However, I also wished to provide the readers with the actual language the teachers used to describe their thoughts about methods programs and their preparation to teach writing by way of free response sections in the online questionnaire. To highlight these various experiences, I requested participation from teachers currently employed at public, private, and parochial middle and high schools across the state. The majority of the teachers participating in this online survey were from public schools and the other half were comprised of private and parochial school teachers. Further, I requested the background information of teachers to understand their collegiate and work experiences; the survey asked these educators to list the number of years they have taught, the grades they primarily teach, their highest level of education, and the university or college where they obtained their teaching license. Among these teachers, the number of years in the field ranged from one year to forty-five years. On average, the sample size taught for fourteen years. Likewise, the responses indicated that the teachers obtained their teaching license from a balance of public and private universities with at least three attending one of the universities listed in the literature review as having a specific writing methods course. However, only one of the respondents took a specific methods course devoted to writing.

In addition to these comments, the survey contained questions regarding their feelings of readiness to teach writing to their students upon graduation and their evaluation of their methods classes prior to their work experience. The questions were designed to allow both quantitative and qualitative responses. The data provided me with a broad understanding of how the teachers' experiences compared or differed to one another, while the free response sections provided me with narratives rather than simply statistics. I asked if they learned more about writing from their Education or English courses based on the set-up and structure of their methods courses. The teachers ranked the topics they wish were covered in their methods courses based on their experience within the field. While these multiple choice answers provided me with large scale pictures of commonalities between these teachers' experience, it is in these free response questions that I began to see the frustration, anxiety, confidence and various other emotions associated with the teachers' history and current status with writing theory and instruction. These comment boxes provided a cathartic way for them to call for change in regards to the methods programs, and I began to understand what they wished their methods courses could have provided them given their experiences with students' writing at the middle and high school level.

While the limitations to my study include the small sample size and the wide variation of methods programs across the state of Ohio, these eighteen teachers, who are actively teaching within the field, have instructed multitudes of students over their career. Because of the sheer number of pupils who have left their classrooms, there are in fact wide range consequences for students even if I did not interview more teachers across the state. Regardless of these limitations, my purpose is to call for more studies of teacher

method programs considering the large majority of the teachers in my study mimicked the findings of Oftedahl and Fagan and Laine in years prior. Likewise, the qualitative and quantitative data suggested a consensus among teachers regarding their preparation to teach writing. The strong similarity between responses shows that the results are significant enough to overcome the limited sample size of my survey.

Survey Results: Do Our English and Education Courses Connect?

In this section, I outline the results of the survey, and overwhelmingly the teachers' responses aligned with the participants in Oftedahl's and Fagan and Laine's studies. The survey asked a variety of questions directed towards establishing an understanding of how the respondents learned about the teaching of writing. These teachers argued more time needed to be devoted to enhancing prospective teachers' ability to teach writing in these methods courses. Over 60% of the respondents stated that they learned more about the teaching of writing in their English courses than their Education classes (see Appendix A for a list of survey questions). The large majority of the respondents found that they gained more knowledge about the teaching of writing in the following areas: their undergraduate English courses, professional development after graduation, and their student teaching experience. The categories with the least amount of responses included Education courses and more specifically their methods courses. Therefore, their answers suggest that teachers currently discover practical approaches to the teaching of writing through North's idea of the *lore of teaching.* While new teachers may have molded their own teaching after their professors in college, this approach only problematizes the model as there is no guarantee these practices will help the varying

levels of writers they will meet in their future classrooms or that are in fact grounded in the best practices.

When asked to describe the classes they took at the undergraduate level that they believed would have helped them in their future classrooms, the survey participants generated a variety of responses ranging from writing workshops to courses devoted solely to grammar instruction. Despite the difference in course titles, the majority of responses focused on five components: grammar instruction, creative writing workshops, writing intensive literature courses, the history of the English language, and a course devoted to rhetorical theory and criticism. Only one teacher responded with a course that incorporated both writing and reading entitled "Reading & Writing Practicum." The above courses, excluding the one focused on both reading and writing, adhere to many of the principles outlined by Richard Gebhardt, such as content knowledge and some theoretical frameworks, yet these courses lack the practical application of these theories. In regards to this question, one teacher simply responded, "loads and loads of creative writing workshops." Another teacher explained the dichotomy between the courses in these two disciplines, "I would say in general the English classes focused on theory and my education courses focused on the teaching of the writing process." Many of the classes focused on developing the future teachers' writing ability rather than instructing them with how they could bring these same techniques into their middle and high school classrooms.

With the limited exception of one respondent who had a course devoted to reading and writing practicums, 93% of those surveyed acknowledged that their methods courses did not specifically focus on writing. Rather as Peter Elbow argues, there exists

either a prioritization of reading instruction or a balance of time spent on reading and writing (Elbow 10). Perhaps one reason for this prioritization of reading instruction in a methods course could be the involvement of various kinds of teachers in a class at smaller universities. According to the survey, 57% of ELA teachers shared that they were enrolled in a methods course with other teachers across the Adolescent Young Adult certification spectrum ranging from middle and high school English, Science, History, and Math teachers. Therefore, a generalized methods course did not instruct ELA teachers in specified curriculum and theories guiding the teaching of writing in their future classrooms, but rather focused on reading comprehension skills, aligning assessments and lessons to standards, integrating technology into classroom teaching, and focusing on cognitive development of students. This prioritization of reading over writing aligns with the state of Ohio's standards pertaining to institutions accredited with Education programs. According to their standards, reading is the only skill needed for all teachers across the disciplines. However, like the importance of reading strategies and theories across disciplines and grade levels for teachers, English teachers should not be the only ones teaching writing in their classrooms. If high school English/Language Arts teachers reveal they do not receive the necessary training in writing theory and pedagogy, then other teachers outside of their content area do not receive it as well. Without an emphasis on preparing all teachers on how to teach writing in their classrooms, the current trend endorsing writing across the curriculum becomes nearly impossible to implement at the high school level as new teachers lack the necessary training about writing instruction across the academic disciplines.

For those 43% of teachers who had a methods course tailored to candidates who prepared for certification in English/Language Arts only, the respondents explained in the words of one teacher, "we covered both the teaching of AYA literature and writing in the course." Frequently, these teachers referred to the content in the course using words such as "both" or "mixture" when referencing the incorporation of reading and writing, but these teachers still wanted more focus on writing instruction. Despite the difference between the content and structure of methods courses across the state of Ohio, many of the teachers I surveyed responded in a similar way to those in the Fagan and Laine study. After their methods courses, the respondents felt the most prepared in six of the following areas: developing writing assignments, scaffolding and sequencing writing assignments, evaluating and commenting on student papers, implementing peer review, helping students respond to fiction texts, and identifying various approaches to grammar instruction. After looking at the first four areas, I argue these topics would probably be discussed in a generalized methods course as well as one tailored specifically to the reading and writing instruction for ELA teachers. Collaborative learning theories proposed by Kenneth Bruffee guide the implementation of peer reviews in the writing classroom as well as group activities across other disciplines as well. Likewise, while the first three focus on writing, it is not surprising that all teachers would be given instruction on curricular sequencing and assessment principles. In relation to the respondents in Fagan and Laine's study, who believed their least successful areas of their own instruction concerned the area of composition. These participants felt well prepared in assessment and the creation of lesson and unit plans; however, like the respondents to my survey, they argued they felt unprepared to teach struggling learners.

From the survey, teachers reiterated that they did not have a wide range of skills to help the diverse learners in their classrooms; for instance, the majority of teachers wished for more instruction concerning theories and practical approaches to help ESL students and struggling writers. One of the teachers I interviewed stated that she believed that her professors in her methods courses taught her and her classmates how to teach the average American student, not students who are more or less advanced writers. When she entered the classroom for the first time as a new teacher, two questions ran through her mind, "How do you reach every student? How do you do it all at once?" In their effort to try to provide pre-service teachers with more training, Randi Dickson and Peter Smagorinsky argue, "We have considered a variety of ways in which to establish relationships that improve articulation between universities and schools and increase the possibility that the transition between the two will be, if not seamless, at least less of a shock" (316). By engaging with a community of current teachers in the surrounding schools, universities can apply these conversations about curriculum to the material provided for teachers in the methods class. In my survey, the teachers shared their shock that the instruction they received in their methods courses did not address a wide spectrum of writing abilities in any given classroom. Rather they were provided with traditional assessment tactics, and after seeing the student populations in their classrooms, they longed for training in modes of alternative assessment of their students' writing such as instruction on how to hold individual writing conferences, multimedia/digital writing, or portfolio assessment.

While the majority of the teachers in my study agreed that they felt adequately prepared to help their students navigate and respond to fiction, only three teachers out of

the eighteen believed they were prepared to teach non-fiction texts to their students. Once again, the survey points out the valorization of reading in English and Education curriculums in the state of Ohio, but also the sustaining focus on works of fiction in specialized methods courses. In an age of standardized testing, one respondent argues that perhaps the prioritization of reading in pre-service teacher education only seems inevitable because "very little is done to evaluate and create original thoughts through writing, rather the focus is on hunting for ideas in other texts." In response to two statements regarding the respondents' preparedness to teach students after their methods courses, 28% strongly disagreed or disagreed that they were sufficiently prepared to teach reading to high school students. In contrast, the same statement regarding their overall preparation to teach writing revealed that 57% strongly disagreed or disagreed that were prepared to teach writing during their time as a pre-student teacher. The findings in my limited survey show these two skills do not align in regards to their importance in the curriculum for teaching candidates. While many of those surveyed have in fact argued they eventually learned methods to address and adapt their writing instruction to the student populations in their classrooms over their teaching career, methods courses should provide a foundation for the teachers in order to build their confidence to teach writing at the same level as reading.

More than likely, in the face of a diverse set of writing abilities in their classrooms, the teachers will retreat back to the area they are most comfortable with, reading. By crafting methods programs, which develop future teachers' content area knowledge and equip teaching candidates with the tools to face a variety of writers in their classroom, educators have the possibility to shift the imbalance of reading and

writing in high school classrooms. In regards to the benefits of methods courses to connect a teaching candidate to their future classroom experience, P.L. Grossman asserts that "those who are prepared through these experiences are better equipped to teach a variety of students using a range of approaches" (Dickson et. al 321). In comparison to Grossman's claims, in the free response section of my survey, one anonymous responder argued, "I think experience comes with time, the methods course gives you a foundation, but work in the field with perfect your craft over time." And other teachers noted that many secondary English/Language Arts teachers graduate with a keen understanding of writing as a process; however, in one teacher's opinion, their prospective programs should prepare candidates to "be able to effectively demonstrate the writing process for students to adopt and have strategies for how to work with struggling writers in a variety of grade levels." Another teacher reiterated this emphasis on process, but not differentiated learning strategies for various learners by asserting that teachers generally graduate and are "not necessarily prepared with effective strategies to teach writing to an entire class." While they might be given overarching theories about the recursive nature of writing, their methods courses do not provide them with the theoretical and pedagogical knowledge into how to address the individualized nature of writing as a process for each student. A sampling of Rhetoric and Composition theorists, such as Nancy Sommers, Mina Shaughnessy, or Peter Elbow may provide a framework for teachers to draw upon in order to sequence and scaffold their day to day lesson plans when they enter the classroom upon graduation. These rhetoricians provide various theories regarding responding to student writing, freewriting, and peer review, which the teacher could adapt to their classroom practice.

"Unnerving, Dumbfounded, Frustrated": Interviews with Three Writing Teachers

The predominate language of the teachers I interviewed after the initial survey revealed feelings of apprehension in explaining how they approach writing in their classrooms. These three interviews included: Samantha, a first year teacher; Karen, a fifth year teacher; and Meghan, a veteran teacher with over twenty years in the field (see Appendix B for the list of interview questions). The new teachers frequently referenced their lack of theoretical language to explain their practices. Karen, a fifth year teacher, currently teaches seventh and eighth grade Language Arts in a parochial elementary school. Her school separates reading and writing instruction between two teachers isolating the skills as separate classes; she focuses on teaching reading with a sprinkling of writing instruction. She exasperatedly explained, "I think there are a lot of things as a young teacher, I didn't have a clue how to teach. But what we do next is what separates the good teachers from the bad. I am continuing to try; we practice through trial and error. And we seek out help, knowing [that] next unit we will teach writing better." She is settling into her change as a high school English teacher for gifted students to her new role as a middle school Language Arts teacher in an affluent parochial school. The two other teachers repeat Karen's phrase, "trial and error" in their description about how to improve their own writing instruction.

One anonymous respondent on the online survey also used this phrase stating that no class or series of classes helped in perfecting the craft of teaching writing. Samantha, a first year teacher in a rural Ohio school district, mimicked the language Karen and this other anonymous teacher used to describe their experience. Samantha articulated her process of learning to teach writing to her specific group of students. She explained, "I

think it took me awhile to understand that high school students do not know what we know. I was getting frustrated at first; *this is basic*, I said to myself, *why don't you understand it*. Eventually, I realized we aren't on the same level [in regards to writing]." Through trial and error with her first writing assignments, she asserted that she realized it was not that her students were not bad writers, but rather they needed more time. The process of writing took longer than she realized. They could not sit down and spontaneously compose a paper in a week like many of Samantha's fellow classmates could in college.

Like the initial survey results indicated, these three teachers noticed the divide between the pedagogical practices and theories they learned in college. Throughout their interviews, these teachers expressed guilt for their uncertainty in responding to my question concerning what theories about the teaching of writing shaped their own teaching philosophies. Samantha apologetically explained: "This answer is probably not going to help you; I learned all the philosophies and theorists, but it's the real life people who have helped me the most." Her mentor teacher provided her with the practical examples she missed in her university classes. In her opinion, no amount of theory could help her if it was not matched with *how* she could use these ideas inside her classroom. However, many of the teachers in the survey argued that they received neither pedagogy nor theory specifically tailored to their future English classrooms. Samantha's comments reveal a common occurrence for first year teachers, which seems to separate theory from practice because of being overwhelmed and under pressure as a new teacher. By providing summaries of theories and practical examples in methods courses, ELA novice teachers can move out of survival mode and begin to reevaluate their teaching practices.

At the beginning of my interview with Karen, she noted her lack of language to describe the effective elements of writing instruction she uses day to day with her students. She simply said, "I am going to sound vague; I don't have the sophisticated jargon to answer this question." She could remember one person, who really influenced her teaching, but she could not remember the theorist's name, and instead she explained her main principles in regards to writing instruction. This theorist wrote about helping the students to understand their thinking by writing about their observations as they read. After a few moments of silence across the telephone, we came to a consensus; she was discussing Ann Bertoff and her idea of dialectic notebooks. Ann Bertoff created the dialectic notebooks, a double entry journal, where students jot down their observations while reading a text, and then they reflect on their observations. For Bertoff, this process engages students to think about their thinking and how they create meaning through language. Even the information Karen learned about Ann Bertoff happened outside the formal classroom; a chance of happenstance in the faculty lounge as her fellow colleague was copying a dialectic notebook. Karen responded, "I feel like nothing stuck out in my head when I was taking the survey about any theorists; it wasn't at the forefront of my degree." Therefore, whether or not these teachers received theory, as did Samantha when she attended a school with a specific writing methods course, the main method these teachers lean towards in acquiring their information about the teaching of writing depended on their own process of trial and error.

Meghan, a veteran teacher, explained that her graduate work allowed her to become aware of the theories behind her practice; this experience gave names and faces to the instructional practices she has used in her classroom for years. She referred to her

lack of language, not her lack of application in regards to the theories; Meghan asserted, "Theorists did not guide me in my own pedagogy; the practical programs I used within the classroom were grounded in the theorists, but I did not know them by name." And during the interview, when these three teachers were asked to delineate the elements of effective writing instruction, their answers drew upon these theories without indicating the specifics of the origins of them. For instance, Meghan described her beliefs about the implementation of writing in three ways: "recursive, process, and modeled." Throughout the interview, she kept referring to the term, "process" when she described her instructional practices; only later explaining that while each of her students engages in the process of writing, the process for each writer at any given stage of the writing is unique. Much like Linda Flower and John Hayes, who propose the cognitive process model of writing, Meghan argues for writing teachers to understand the cognitive processes that take place while the student writes. When discussing her students' process of writing, she argues, in relation to Flower and Hayes that her students move through the processes of prewriting, writing, and revision in a flexible, recursive way, which is individualized to the student. While Meghan could not articulate the direct source of her knowledge, she continued to draw upon the processes of individual writers because of its success in *her* past, not in a study. She utilizes theories, but while she cannot articulate the names, she does know the content and application.

These three teachers agreed on elements of effective writing instruction. All three teachers discussed giving exemplars in the classroom. They articulated that showing students examples of good writing either in models or in the form of reading such as argumentative or narrative essays helps the students to consider the organization of their

papers. Likewise, Meghan and Karen believe in using freewriting or informal writing assessments in order to help students brainstorm ideas for their writing or practice new writing skills. Karen argues for conferencing with students to look back on what they wrote in order for the students to reflect on their writing, which mimics the theories of Nancy Sommers. Meghan also comments the recursive nature of writing, and she explained that she gives students the chance to self-reflect to see how to revise and redo portions of the process. She articulates, "I am finding this is a piece I am doing more and more; they resist revising, but when a grade is attached to the piece, then they are motivated to revise." Meghan constantly reevaluates her teaching methods as she has a wide range of tools, theoretical and pedagogical, to draw upon to meet the demands of her students. Yet, even after her fifth year of teaching writing, Karen does not feel completely confident with her writing abilities stating, "I have more experience with reading instruction." However, Karen seeks out the help of others in her field to ask their advice and their lesson plans for writing assignments. Both Meghan and Karen write with their students to see if the prompt is clear or to provide a model for their students if one does not exist, but Samantha has her students approach the prompt on their own before consulting with her. Throughout her longer career, Meghan seems to be more confident to articulate her inadequacies as a writing teacher as well as her strengths as a writing teacher. A veteran teacher provides a clear articulation of the theoretical and pedagogical practices in her classroom, whereas a first year teacher carefully navigates a web of misunderstandings, questions, and confusion while still trying to maintain her confidence. Meghan and Karen use failure as a tool to reevaluate their own teaching to address their students' needs.

In regards to reading and writing instruction, when I asked the teachers to describe their initial feelings to teaching both subjects during their first year of teaching, contrasting feelings emerged from Karen and Meghan in relation to Samantha. For Samantha, these two subjects created equal dismay. She described the teaching of these two skills with the word, "frustrated." However, the process of teaching writing was, in Samantha's opinion, more "time-consuming" since she needed to seek out more strategies and approaches for her students. The adjectives used to describe reading and writing instruction begin to change the longer they have been teaching in response to the length the teachers have been removed from their first year of teaching. For instance, Karen used a series of contrasting adjectives to describe her teaching of reading and writing. During her first year of writing instruction, she articulated that she found it "unnerving, frustrating, dumbfounded;" however, she expressed her confidence, intrigue, and motivation to teaching reading because of her focused approach. Meghan reiterated this same difference in her novice teaching abilities. She described her teaching of writing early in her career as "neglectful" as she "got caught up in the teaching of reading," whereas, from the beginning, she argues her feelings associated with writing would be "creative, constructive, and relevant." The teaching of reading captivated her attention in the classroom with writing falling second to the acquisition of reading skills. However, after describing her initial teaching of writing as neglectful, she was quick to explain her change in regards to writing instruction over her past twenty years as a teacher. She defined her instruction not in terms of her feelings, but by theoretical constructs, "recursive, modeled, process."

Part of the frustration of these teachers stems from their own writing abilities, which come in conflict with the experiences of many of their high school students. Meghan argues, "I am a natural writer; the process of writing is fluid for me. Paradoxically, for many of my students this process is not." She explains that it was only through her experience teaching composition at a community college that she was able to see first-hand how others struggled with writing, and how neglectful she was in her own teaching of writing at the high school level. In her role as college composition teacher, she was forced to reevaluate her own writing practices and instructional methods. Furthermore, Karen reiterated this same lack of understanding. She described the first time she assigned an argumentative essay as a student teacher; she explained she needed to make sure the students understood how to construct an argument, "I was frustrated by all of the questions they had. I actually had to Google it. Writing an argument came natural to me, and I thought 'how am I supposed to teach this to a 15 year old.'" Similar to the results of the survey, these teachers want strategies to help the various types of writers in their classroom. They believe methods courses should equip future ELA teaching candidates with specific skills in relation to the content, not only lesson planning and classroom management skills.

These teachers seek out pedagogical and theoretical approaches to use in their classrooms because of their students' experiences with writing. However, there seems to be disconnections between the assumptions of professors at the undergraduate level and the teaching candidates' view of their own confidence in teaching writing. Samantha explains she wished she learned more about teaching writing as a process. She observed a contrast between her professors and herself arguing, "My professors assumed we knew

how to write;" therefore, she and her classmates must know how to teach writing by referencing their own writing process and breaking down the steps for their students.

Throughout the interviews, the teachers tried to make connections during the interview through comments like "you know what I mean" or "my principal and I discussed." These teachers expressed feelings of isolation and anxiety in relation to their student teaching experience and first couple of years in the classroom. After leaving their methods classes, they felt confident in their abilities to teach reading in their classroom, but the voices of the teachers suggest that writing exiles them into their own classrooms. While the new teacher, Samantha, could recognize these gaps in her own teaching abilities, the older teachers articulated these disparities and provided their opinion on how they address these gaps within the classroom. Therefore, methods programs should equip teachers with a pathway to find theories or pedagogical approaches to solve these issues. By better preparing teaching candidates, this work will help them to better evaluate writing issues in their classrooms, and the teachers will have knowledge on how best to help their students.

Answering the Call from These Teachers: A Conclusion

These questions proposed by researchers in the fields of Education and Rhetoric and Composition cannot be easily answered in one small survey; however, my aim in this essay is not to solve, but to raise awareness of the large dichotomy in English teacher methods programs within the state of Ohio. The voices of these teachers reveal that not much has changed from the Fagan/Laine study and Oftedahl's research. One would have assumed with the increased attention to students' writing, methods courses would have

reflected this shift. Many times the voices of teachers, the agents in the classroom day to day, who collaborate with students, are frequently left out of these crucial conversations happening at the collegiate and state level. Collegiate educators do not ask these classroom teachers if their methods courses and other courses at the university level were effective considering many current teachers noted a gap between their education and the needs of their students.

As I end this essay, it is my sincere hope that educators in the fields of Education and Rhetoric and Composition continue to work together to design methods programs and undergraduate classes to expose potential teaching candidates to various theoretical and pedagogical frameworks to draw upon as they enter the classroom. In order to bridge the gap noted by these teachers in my interviews, professors of methods courses should collaborate with current ELA teachers within the field. They could bring in panels of ELA teachers or co-teach with a current high school teacher, thereby de-centering their authority, so students will see a balance between theory and practical examples. Likewise, these teachers could explain their own struggles in the classroom as well as provide information concerning how to teach ESL students, what are successful ways to approach struggling writers, how to utilize peer review, and how to incorporate non-fiction into the classroom based on Rhetoric and Composition theories as well as best practices.

Designing a methods course based on conversations with real teachers in the current field will balance the theoretical constructs with practical ones that future teachers can take into their own classrooms. As Peter Elbow suggests, a balance between preparing future teachers to instruct their students in both reading and writing needs to be

achieved at the state level. By creating separate methods courses for reading *and w*riting, some universities in Ohio attempt to address both skills for these future teachers; however, methods courses for ELA teachers must balance reading and writing, but also theory and pedagogy. We must listen to the voices of teachers, who echo the struggles of their students with writing; therefore, providing the best way to move students towards proficient levels of writing. When college professors take into account the testimonies from teachers about their students' needs and the tools teachers need, they can use this information to inform their own teaching practices at the collegiate level for methods programs. They can designate classroom instructional time in methods programs to show new teachers that theory and practice need to be balanced in order to help students improve their writing. Novice teachers know how to diagnose the students' writing skills and their own ineffective teaching practices that need revision, but their methods program should adequately provide a path where they can go to find theories to inform their practices or reflect on their practices to inform their use of theories.

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Appendix A: Survey Questions

1. What is the number of years you have taught?
2. What grades do you primarily teach?
3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
4. From which university did you obtain your teaching license?
5. How would you describe the school where you are currently employed?
6. Describe the student population you currently work with in your school?
7. Did you learn more about writing instruction from your Education courses or your English courses during your undergraduate or courses?
8. Where have you learned the most about how to teach writing?
9. Describe below the classes you took at the undergraduate level that focused specifically on writing instruction, theories about writing/rhetoric, creative writing workshops, or the history of the English language?
10. Was your teaching methods course designed to focus on training for secondary Language Arts teachers only?
11. Did your methods courses focus specifically on the teaching of writing?
12. If you answered yes or no to the last question, please describe the topics you covered in this method course.
13. After completing your methods course, please explain how well you felt this course prepared you on the following subjects:
    a. Developing writing assignments
    b. Sequencing and scaffolding writing assignments
    c. Evaluating and commenting on student papers
    d. Holding conferences or consultations with students regarding their written work
    e. Theories and techniques to help ESL students in regards to writing
    f. Theories and techniques to help struggling writers
    g. How to help students write in response to nonfiction texts
    h. How to help students write in response to fiction texts
    i. Introducing and teaching how to craft a research argument
    j. Various approaches to grammar instruction
    k. Portfolio assessment
    l. History of the English language and linguistics
    m. Peer Review
    n. Multimedia/Digital Writing
14. I was sufficiently prepared to teach writing to high school students.
    a. Strongly agree
    b. Agree
    c. Disagree
    d. Strongly disagree
15. I was sufficiently prepared to teach reading to high school students after my methods course.
    a. Strongly agree
    b. Agree

    c. Disagree
    d. Strongly disagree
16. I felt more prepared to teach which of the following upon graduation from my university.
    a. Reading
    b. Writing
    c. Both reading and writing
17. If you could have changed your methods courses, what topics do you wish you could have covered upon reflection of your experience as a teacher? Please respond below.
18. After reviewing your own teaching experience, what do you believe prospective secondary Language Arts teachers should know about the writing process or writing theory before they graduate from their prospective programs?

Appendix B: Select Interview Questions

1. What are the elements of effective writing instruction?
2. What theories about writing and the teaching of writing shape your own writing pedagogy?
3. Describe how you approach the teaching of writing in your classroom.
4. What areas could you improve on as a teacher of writing?
5. What adjectives would you use to describe your writing instruction?
6. What adjectives would you use to describe your reading instruction?
7. What do you wish you would have learned about the teaching of writing while still in college?
8. How has the transition and implementation of Common Core affected your teaching of writing?
9. Describe the role of writing in your classroom, in your school, and in your district.